

Town of Sandisfield

Select Board
April 25, 2022

Minutes for Select Board meeting held on Monday, April 25, 2022 at 7:00p.m. at the Town Hall Annex, 66 Sandisfield Road, Sandisfield, MA

Members present: George Riley, Alex Bowman, Steve Seddon

Called to order at 7:00PM

- 1. Call to order: Note that the meeting is being recorded**
- 2. Review and sign minutes of meetings. Points to minutes**

George reads the Select Board meeting guidelines available on the Town website.

https://www.sandisfieldma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhli1171/f/uploads/sb_meeting_guidelines_2.pdf

3. Review and sign purchase orders

Emergency Management has requested the purchase of a Polaris ATV for \$9,233.18 from New Boston Crane. Jonathan notes that legally, any item under \$10,000 can be purchased without receiving multiple quotes. However, it is good practice to obtain multiple. The Select Board agrees to request two more quotes.

4. Discuss and sign Year-End Transfers

Jonathan explains that if any budget line is overspent, it will require a Reserve Fund Transfer, which has a total of \$10,000 this fiscal year. The Town Manager, Accountant and Finance Committee need to approve and sign these transfers. Last week, the town had almost \$9,500 in overages on the fuel budget alone, which almost maxed out the Reserve Fund immediately. To accommodate any additional overspent budgets, Interdepartmental Transfers will need to occur. However, these transfers cannot be made until May 1, and will not be processed until next week. The Public Safety Officer line item, which was budgeted at almost \$60,000, was never filled, so this is where the transfers will come from. Interdepartmental Transfers need approval from both the Select Board and Finance Committee in a public meeting.

This item is tabled. The Select Board and Finance Committee will sign May 2, 2022.

5. Sign Business Licenses

- **Berkshire Fireworks**
- **DayDreamz Estates LLC**

All Select Board members sign the business license for Berkshire Fireworks. Alex Bowman abstains from signing the license for DayDreamz Estates LLC, noting there is nothing in the Sandisfield bylaws regarding issuing a local license for cannabis cultivation.

6. Sign DPW Union Contract

The Select Board signs the contract.

7. Review DCR Conservation Project Announcement and sign certificate and waiver

George signs and reads the announcement which notes that the Department of Conservation and Recreation may acquire interest in a parcel of land in Sandisfield, known as the Minery property. This land will be used as protected open-space for conservation and recreation.

It's noted that it has yet to be decided whether the exchange of \$30,000 for the property would be the most financially beneficial route for Sandisfield.

8. Review bid submitted to provide Broadband to 189 & 193 North Main St

There are two Sandisfield homes proving too far from the rest of the lines for Spectrum to connect to. Steve reports he spoke with Bill Herrick who was involved with the installation of Broadband in Otis about connecting the two remaining Sandisfield homes in the neighboring town since they are closer to the Otis line. The bid totalled \$11,457.59. Steve would like to conduct additional research as to what other towns have done in this situation.

Carl Nett suggests the town purchase Starlink boxes for these two residences, which would be significantly less expensive. Alex will reach out to the state to see how they have dealt with this issue in the past.

9. Review and finalize FY23 budget

The Select Board will need to sign off on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant next Monday, 5/2. Jonathan requests the Finance Committee make accommodations to give their final recommendations on the warrant numbers by Monday. The goal of tonight's meeting will be to agree on the operating budget and special articles.

Jonathan reviews the current budget. He reports the total operating budget has increased by 1.39%, which is a \$50,000 increase. There are two items in the budget that need discussion, the first being Operations and Maintenance Salaries which is currently only budgeted at one dollar. In order to fill this position the Select Board will need to make a decision on this. George suggests putting in a number as a placeholder. However, Jonathan recommends developing a job description and required hours before setting a pay rate and leaving it at a dollar. However, it is determined the budget will not be under \$5,000, and the Select Board agrees to use this figure.

George motions to insert \$5,000 for Operation Maintenance Salary. Alex seconds. Motion passes unanimously.

Roger expresses concerns about how the budget is presented, for he believes the budget should better refer to the General Ledger actual spending, rather than what was budgeted for and approved at Town Meeting. Jonathan explains for transparency, it's important to show what was approved at Town Meeting to identify where the budgets were over or underspent. Including the FY22 actuals will cause confusion, for there are lines that may not be appropriately reflected. Jonathan examples the Public Safety Officer. Since this position was vacant this year, the GL would reflect zero spent. Should the position be filled in FY23, the GL would not be helpful in determining an appropriate budget.

Roger notes the Accountant needs to explain some of the figures in the General Ledger, which he believes to be incorrect. Jonathan will speak with the Accountant, and offers to discuss privately with Roger to come to an agreement about the budget presentation. George stops the conversation.

Jonathan reports Sandisfield currently has \$1,231,000 in Free Cash, and Stabilization has approximately \$1,400,000. He reviews the special articles, which include:

- \$397,000 Grader
- \$84,000 Engineering to create shovel-ready projects for a grant
- \$18,000 Audit
- \$9,500 potential fee for a Recruiting Firm
- \$10,000 Recertification
- \$350,000 Used Fire Truck
- \$533 FY21 Unpaid Bills
- \$158,000 Roller

Jonathan discusses lowering the levy, which would keep the tax bills the same as last year. It was suggested not to raise the levy this fiscal year because Sandisfield has been over budgeting and under spending.

It's noted that the Select Board may want to consider borrowing for the grader instead of the roller, for the interest rate is favorable right now at 1%. Instead of spending Free Cash, it's explained that borrowing now may prevent the town from having to borrow later at a much higher interest rate.

George motions to borrow from state funds for the grader, and pay for the roller out of free cash. Alex seconds. Alex suggests borrowing for both the grader and roller.

Steve proposes transferring funds from Free Cash into Stabilization to assist in payment for Broadband by lowering the principal and aggregate assessment. Jonathan reminds the Board that they cannot borrow for Broadband because nothing is owed and there is no collateral.

Alex motions to borrow for the grader and roller. Steve seconds. Motion passes unanimously.

It is confirmed that the engineering the shovel-ready projects is for a specific grant that the town is very likely to receive should they conduct the engineering. Alex reports there is a new grant that would not require engineering to be conducted before applying. George notes that should it be determined the town has a good chance of acquiring the new grant, they do not have to use the \$84,000 allocated for engineering, and the money would go back into free cash. It's suggested both grants be applied for.

The Select Board agrees to pay for the audit, recruiting firm fee, and recertification out of free cash. The fire truck for \$350,000 and FY21 unpaid bills will also come out of free cash.

Should the Select Board agree to lowering the levy limit, the tax rate would not be altered significantly because the aggregate would remain the same. Alex expresses concern that the majority of the Highway budgets have been level funded, regardless of the majority of the roads needing significant work. The possibility of setting aside funds for drainage projects is discussed. It's noted that grading has been done incorrectly in the past, and it is recommended money go towards proper training for DPW employees.

Jonathan summarizes Sandisfield will use \$600,000 in Free Cash and borrow for \$550,000. There is \$600,000 left in free cash, which can be used to lower the levy limit.

Jonathan will calculate and report the appropriate number to utilize to lower the levy limit.

Steve suggests moving funds out of free cash into the Capital Improvement Stabilization in order to have money allocated for large capital expenses should the opportunity to pursue them arise.

George motions to move \$250,000 from free cash into the Capital Improvement Stabilization. Steve seconds. Motion passes unanimously.

Jonathan reports he plans to give Town Counsel a draft warrant to review, for the Select Board should sign the warrant at their next meeting. The Planning Board's wording for all the bylaws will be submitted as written. George reports he had made some revisions, which Town Counsel has determined not to be legitimate. He reads a letter from Town Counsel noting that the language approved by the Planning Board after public meeting cannot be amended prior to Town Meeting unless the Planning Board does not give a report within 21 days. If the Select Board wishes to amend the language, they can make a motion on the floor of Town Meeting.

It's noted that The Select Board had previously voted to approve amendments to the Planning Board's bylaws, but upon understanding this was inappropriate, the votes were rescinded. The Planning Board's bylaws will be on the warrant as written by them.

George proposes the Select Board send the Lighting Bylaw to Town Counsel as well. The report should be received by next Monday where the Select Board can review it at the meeting. This Lighting bylaw is a general bylaw, not a zoning bylaw, and therefore is in the purview of the Select Board. Bill Taylor suggests calling it the Dark Sky bylaw instead of "Lighting."

Alex reads the proposed bylaw amendment regarding changing the requirements for sending out the Annual Town Report, noting that it will no longer be sent to every voter household, but rather be made available online, in town offices, and the library by March 1. Written requests can be made for a physical copy. A postcard would also be sent out promptly after March 1 detailing this information.

10. Review letter from SAMA regarding change in the scale of operations

George reads the letter from SAMA which notes after much deliberation they will be going from a Tier 11 (100k sq ft) facility to a Tier 4 (30k sq ft), with the possibility of applying as a Tier 11 facility in the future. They have received a Provisional License

from the Massachusetts Cannabis Control Commission for a Tier 4 license and expect to conduct their first harvest in 2023. It's clarified this does not change the scope of SAMA's special permit, for they were granted *up to* 100,000 square feet.

11. Interim Town Manager Updates

Jonathan reports he has been in contact with Mike Parsons about conducting a survey on the property that might be sold to the Rudolph's on Route 57 as referenced in the Special Town Meeting. Mike also plans to speak to Brad Curry about the failing DPW septic system. Funds for the septic have been set aside in FY22; should they not be utilized for this project by July 1, the funds will be encumbered.

Jennifer Pilbin will be required to present an affidavit as proof she is residing elsewhere and not on the premises of her trailer in Sandisfield. Receipts will be required. This request will be made before ticketing begins. In order to guarantee continued compliance, the Select Board will require the receipt of residence elsewhere every month.

Bridge inspections are up-to-date from 2020; 2021-2022 inspections should be received in the near future.

The town's Municipal Hearings Officer position is currently vacant, which is required by the Fire Department under false alarms in order to be able to start fining for them. Ralph Morrison nominated Jonathan, and Jonathan accepted. He will be taking a free online class on May 23 at 10AM. The appointment process for this position has yet to be distinguished.

12. Select Board Updates

13. Future agenda items

- Lighting bylaw
- Sign Annual Town Meeting warrant
- Decide how to mail the warrant, which is 17 pages. Jonathan notes that Sandisfield's Town Clerk has always mailed the warrant, but recommends Kwik Print handle the mailing. All that will need to be supplied to the company are the addresses.
- Accept Plumbing Inspector resignation

14. Review mail

15. Review and sign warrants

16. Topics not reasonably anticipated by the Chair 48 hours in advance of the meeting

Meeting adjourned at 10:19pm.

George Riley

Alex Bowman

Steve Seddon